

Service Date: December 24, 1996

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATION
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

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IN THE MATTER of the)	UTILITY DIVISION
MONTANA POWER COMPANY'S)	
Electric Restructuring)	DOCKET NO. D96.12.206
Informational Filing.)	ORDER NO. 5963

PROTECTIVE ORDER

BACKGROUND

On December 12, 1996 the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC or Commission) received a Motion for Protective Order from the Montana Power Company (MPC) seeking to limit access and use of proprietary and confidential information submitted by MPC to support its informational filing on its proposed transition plan for electrical restructuring to be filed on Friday, December 20, 1996. The specific information for protection includes MPC's power supply costs, pricing data and customer-related information. MPC states that this information is market sensitive in that it reveals MPC's costs of providing services to customers, the transfer prices between MPC's Supply and Services Divisions and certain customer-sensitive information (e.g., ASIMI prices).

In its Motion MPC maintains that this information is "trade secret," pursuant to §§ 69-3-105(2) and 30-14-402(4), MCA. MPC states that this information is not generally known outside MPC's business and has only limited dissemination within MPC. MPC has taken stringent cautions to preserve the confidentiality of this information, including limiting the number of parties with access to the information. MPC's position is that the value to MPC in keeping this information secret from competitors is significant and that disclosure of these terms would cause MPC and its customers irreparable harm. Public disclosure of these terms would irreversibly affect MPC's and its customers' ability to compete with others for future business. Given the strict secrecy in which MPC has kept the information, MPC states that it is unlikely that its terms could be acquired or duplicated without forced disclosure.

MPC maintains that forced disclosure could have a harmful effect on the competitiveness of the electric supply business to the detriment of energy consumers, who might pay higher prices as a result of disclosure. A competitor in determining MPC's negotiating strategies could determine MPC's pricing methodology., which would allow a bidder to submit a bid for unit prices slightly lower than MPC's most recently disclosed unit price. This knowledge could give the competition an economic advantage in that small differences in terms can separate the winning bid from the losing one.

The Commission grants MPC's request for protection of proprietary information on MPC power supply costs, pricing data and customer-related information. The Commission cautions MPC to use care in categorizing information as proprietary and not to use the protection to unreasonably restrict access to information.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED that this Protective Order, covering the material and information described by MPC in its Motion, and material and information filed throughout the proceedings in Docket No. D96.12.206, determined by the MPC to be confidential, shall be in effect, unless there is a Commission or MPC decision that the information need not remain protected, as provided in this Order.

Confidential Information

1. (a) Confidential Information. All documents, data, information, studies and other materials furnished pursuant to any interrogatories, requests for information, other discovery requests, or subpoenas and depositions, or pursuant to Commission order, that are claimed to be trade secret, privileged or confidential shall be furnished pursuant to the terms of this Order. All persons accorded access under this Order shall treat this trade secret, confidential or privileged commercial and financial information as confidential (referred to as "Confidential Information"). Confidential Information shall not be used nor disclosed except for the purpose of this proceeding, and solely in accordance with this Order. The Commission shall mark or stamp all material claimed to be Confidential Information with a designation indicating its trade secret, proprietary or confidential

nature, and submit this Confidential Information to the Commission on yellow paper for identification for filing purposes.

(b) Use of Confidential Information and Persons Entitled to Review. All Confidential Information submitted pursuant to this Order shall be given solely to counsel for the parties and shall not be used or disclosed except for purposes of this proceeding. However, counsel may authorize access to any specific Confidential Information solely for the purpose of this proceeding to those persons designated their experts in this matter. Such experts may not be an officer, director or employee (except legal counsel) of the parties, or an officer, director, employee or stockholder or member of an association or corporation of which any party is a member, subsidiary or affiliate. Any member of the Public Service Commission and staff, the Consumer Counsel and its staff and staff members of intervenor State agencies may have access to any Confidential Information provided under this Order, and shall be bound by the terms of this Order.

(c) Nondisclosure Agreement. Before giving access to Confidential Information to any counsel or expert pursuant to ¶ 1(b), counsel for the person seeking review of the Confidential Information shall deliver a copy of this Order to the person, who shall agree in writing to comply with and be bound by this Order before disclosure. Confidential Information shall not be disclosed to any person who has not signed a nondisclosure agreement form incorporated herein as Exhibit "A." Exhibit "A" requires the persons obtaining disclosure first to read a copy of this Protective Order and certify in writing that they have reviewed the Order and consent to be bound by its terms. The agreement shall contain the signatory's full name, permanent address and employer, and the name of the party with whom the signatory is associated. The agreement shall be delivered to counsel for MPC and a copy delivered to the Commission.

(d) Delivery of Documentation. Where feasible, Confidential Information will be marked as such and delivered to counsel. The Confidential Information may also be made available for review by counsel and experts accorded access in a place and a time mutually agreed on by the parties, or as directed by the Commission.

2. Challenge to Confidentiality.

(a) This Order establishes a procedure to expedite handling of information that a party claims is confidential; it shall not be construed as an agreement or ruling on the confidentiality of any such document.

(b) Objection to Trade Secret Status. If the parties are unable to agree that certain documents, data, information, studies or other matters constitute trade secret, confidential or privileged commercial and financial information, the party objecting to the trade secret claim shall request the Commission's review pursuant to this Order. Upon determining whether any documents, data, information, studies or other submitted matters are Confidential Information, the Commission will enter an order resolving the issue.

(c) Request for Removal from Protection. Any party upon ten (10) days notice may file a request for removal of Confidential Information from the protective requirements of this Order or from the sealed record, to be placed in the public record. Upon a challenge to the confidential or proprietary nature of this information, a hearing examiner and/or the Commission shall resolve the issue following proceedings in camera conducted with only persons present with authorized access to such confidential matter. The record of in camera hearings shall be marked "CONFIDENTIAL--SUBJECT TO PROTECTIVE ORDER, DOCKET NO. D96.12.206" and transcribed only upon agreement of the parties or Order of the Hearing Examiner or the Commission. If transcribed, the record shall be separately bound, segregated, sealed, and withheld from inspection by any person not authorized disclosure under this Order. There may be no release from the restrictions of this Order without either an agreement of the parties or an Order of the Hearing Examiner or the Commission, after notice to the parties and a hearing. If the Hearing Examiner or the Commission should rule that any information should be removed from the protection of this Order or the sealed record, the parties, at the request of the providing party to enable it to seek a stay or other relief, shall not disclose such information or use it in the public record for five (5) business days.

3. Seal. While in the custody of the Commission, materials subject to this Order shall be marked "CONFIDENTIAL--SUBJECT TO PROTECTIVE ORDER, DOCKET NO. D96.12.206." Due to the trade secret nature, these materials shall not be considered as records in

the possession or retained by the Commission within the meaning of the open meetings or public records statutes.

Citations and References in Pleadings and Briefs

4. Reference to Confidential Information in the sealed record, when necessary in pleadings, cross-examination, briefs, argument or motions, shall be by citation of title or exhibit number or some other nonconfidential description. Substantive references to Confidential Information shall be placed in a separate section of the pleading or brief and submitted to the Commission under seal. This sealed section shall be served only on counsel of record (one copy each) who have signed an Exhibit "A." All the protections afforded in this Order apply to materials prepared and distributed under this paragraph.

Reference to Confidential Information

5. (a) Use in Decisions and Orders. When practicable, the Commission will refer to Confidential Information in only a general form and will avoid reproduction in any decision of Confidential Information to the greatest possible extent. If it is necessary in this proceeding to discuss Confidential Information other than in a general form, the discussion with this protected information shall be placed in a separate section of the Order or Decision under seal. This sealed section shall be served only on counsel of record (one copy each) who have signed an Exhibit "A." Counsel for other parties shall receive the cover sheet to the sealed portion and may review the sealed portion on file with the Commission once they have signed an Exhibit "A."

(b) Summary for Record. In all instances when MPC files material with the Commission pursuant to this order which MPC considers to be Proprietary Information, MPC shall concurrently file a brief non-proprietary written summary of the Proprietary Information. In other instances, if deemed necessary by the Commission, MPC shall prepare a written summary of the Proprietary Information referred to in a decision or order to be placed on the public record.

6. Segregation of Files. All Confidential Information filed with the Commission will be sealed by the Commission, segregated and withheld from inspection by any person not bound by the terms of this Order. Confidential Information may be released from the restrictions of this Order by agreement of the parties or, after notice and hearing, pursuant to an Order of the Commission or final order of a Court having jurisdiction. The Consumer Counsel may retain all written Confidential

Information obtained under this order, but shall withhold it from inspection by others, except for Consumer Counsel staff and counsel, unless it is released by the Public Service Commission and/or a final order of a court under this paragraph, subject always to the terms of confidentiality in this Order.

Preservation of Confidentiality

7. All persons receiving access to any Confidential Information by reason of this Order shall neither use nor disclose the Confidential Information for purposes of business or competition, or any purpose other than to prepare for and conduct this proceeding as provided in this Order, and shall take reasonable precautions to keep the Confidential Information secure, pursuant to this Order.

Reservation of Rights

8. The parties affected by the terms of this Protective Order further retain the right to question, challenge and object to the admissibility of any and all data, information, studies and other matters furnished under the terms of this Protective Order in response to interrogatories, requests for information or cross-examination on the grounds of relevancy or materiality.

Nonwaiver of Rights

9. This Order does not constitute any waiver of the rights of any party in this Docket to contest any assertion or finding of trade secret, confidentiality or privilege, and to appeal such determination of the Commission or such assertion by a party.

Amendment or Modification

10. The Commission retains jurisdiction of this matter and may alter or amend these provisions, upon motion by an appropriate party and reasonable notice.

DONE AND DATED this 23rd day of December, 1996 by a vote of 5 - 0.

BY ORDER OF THE MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NANCY MCCAFFREE, Chair

DAVE FISHER, Vice Chair

BOB ANDERSON, Commissioner

DANNY OBERG, Commissioner

BOB ROWE, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kathlene M. Anderson
Commission Secretary

(SEAL)

NOTE: Any interested party may request the Commission to reconsider this decision. A motion to reconsider must be filed within ten (10) days. See ARM 38.2.4806.

EXHIBIT "A"

I have reviewed the foregoing Protective Order in MPC Docket No. D96.12.206, dated December 23, 1996 and agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of such order.

Signature

Typed or Printed Name

Employer or Firm

Business Address

Party

Date